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Ellsberg Says CIA Chief Anticipated Chilean Coup

By SETH KUPFERBERG and RICHARD H.P. SIA

Daniel Ellsberg '52 told an off-the-record Nieman fellows meeting Monday that William E. Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has acknowledged that he "knew of the imminence of" the September 1973 Chilean military coup.

Ellsberg also quoted Colby as saying that "a political decision was made not to inform" the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende Gossens.

Colby's remarks came in the course of a conversation during a conference of former CIA agents, government officials and journalists on the CIA and covert actions. The Center for National Security Studies sponsored the Washington conference, which was held this September 13 and 14.

Ellsberg made public his talk with the Niemans yesterday, denouncing Colby's off-the-record meeting with Niemans last night and describing such briefings—in which journalists agree not to publish what they learn—as "a method of plugging newsmen into the government bureaucracy and making them part of it."

A Senate subcommittee learned last summer of CIA funding of opposition to Allende's government, beginning in 1970. The New York Times reported two days after the coup that "senior American officials" acknowledged having advance word of it.

But the Times reports did not specifically cite CIA foreknowledge of Allende's overthrow. And White House and State Department officials contended that reports of the coup did not reach responsible officials until after it began. They implied that the reports were not taken seriously because rumors of a coup had been current throughout 1973.

"There was absolutely no way of knowing beforehand that on any of these dates, including the September 11 date, a coup attempt would be made," Paul J. Hare, a State Department spokesman, said on September 14, 1973.

"The administration had been receiving rumors of unrest in the Chilean military for more than one year," Gerald L. Warren, White House spokesman, told reporters that week. "Aside from these

rumors, the President had no advance knowledge of any specific plan for a coup."

Ellsberg said Colby told him he was aware of and agreed with the "political

decision"—presumably made by then national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger '50 or then president Richard M. Nixon—not to alert Allende to the impending military revolt.

"I said, 'Did you know the plans for this coup just before it happened,'" Ellsberg told the Niemans. "Colby did not appear to be mincing any words about how much they knew. A political decision was made

not to tell Allende what we knew—now, there would be no political decision if what we knew was what we read in UPI."

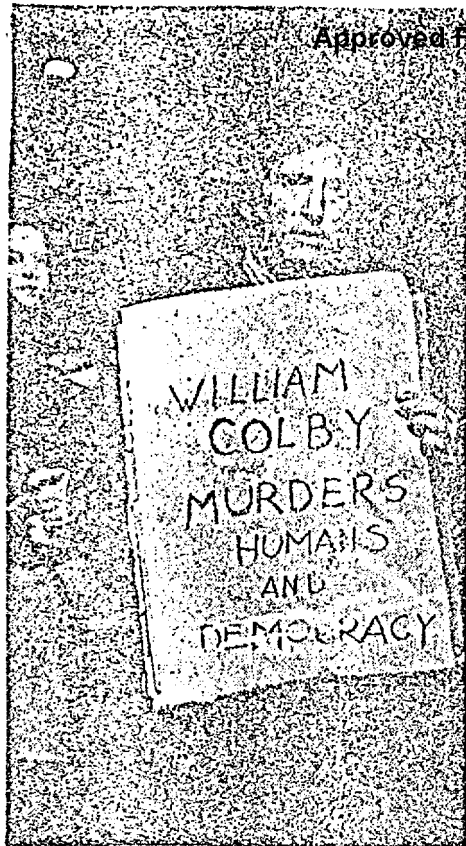
James C. Thomson Jr., curator of the Nieman Fellowships, released a tape of Ellsberg's talk with the Niemans yesterday afternoon, after Ellsberg said his remarks should be on the public record.

Ellsberg also said he would not have agreed to meet with the Niemans if he had realized his appearance would help "legitimize" Colby's.

Ellsberg quoted Colby as saying that he would have "preferred" that the Popular Unity candidate for president of Chile lose the election scheduled for 1976.

But Ellsberg said there was an "unmistakable inference" that the CIA "preferred" this coup to happen than not to happen—and indeed Colby made that very clear during the day, that he preferred the current regime to the past regime."

Ellsberg, Daniel
CIA 4 Chile
Conference
Thompson, James C.



"I've never done anything off the record—except that," DANIEL ELLSBERG '52 (above) said last night, while he and 150 other people picketed an off-the-record meeting featuring CIA director WILLIAM E. COLBY.

